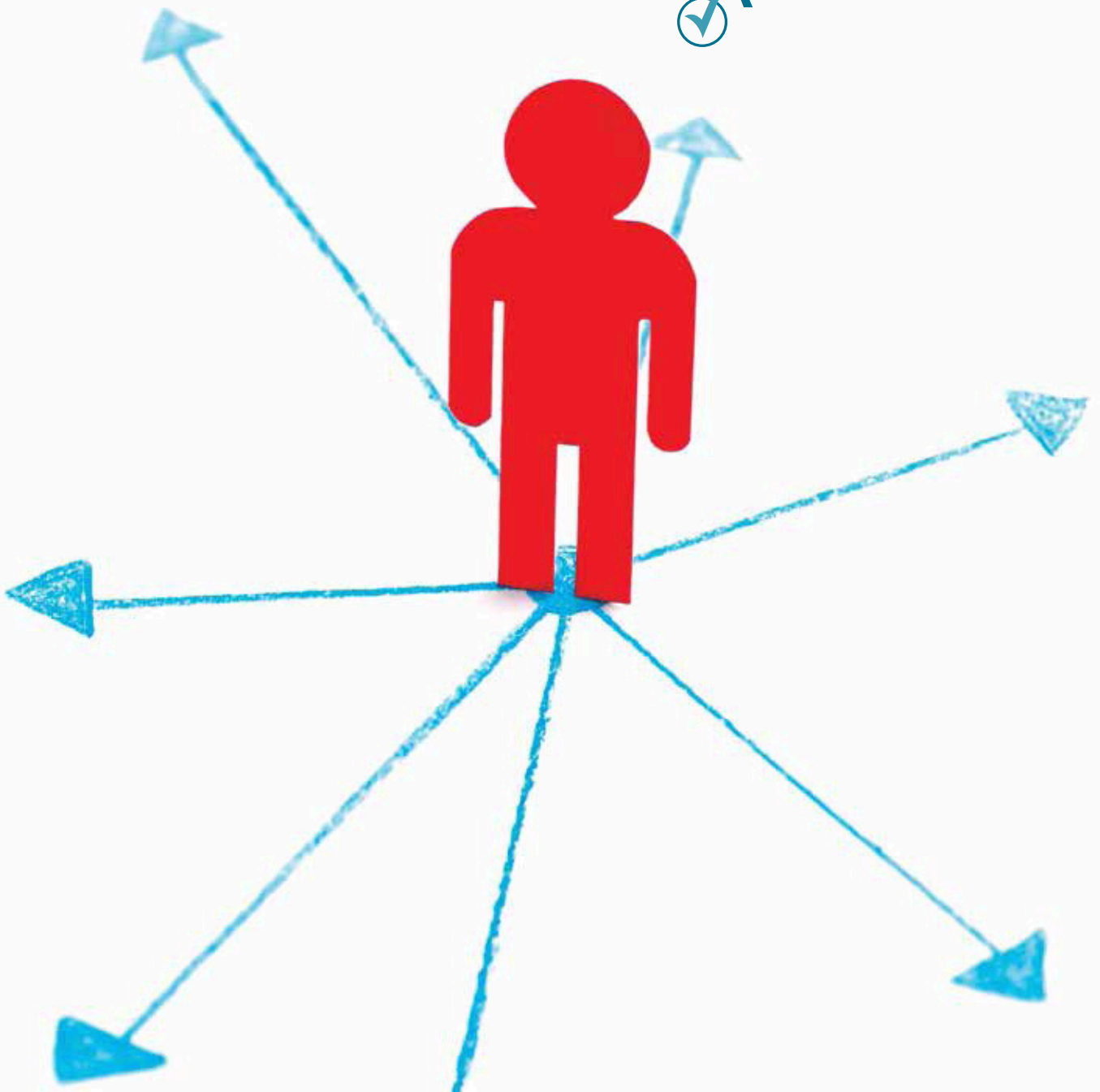


Key messages

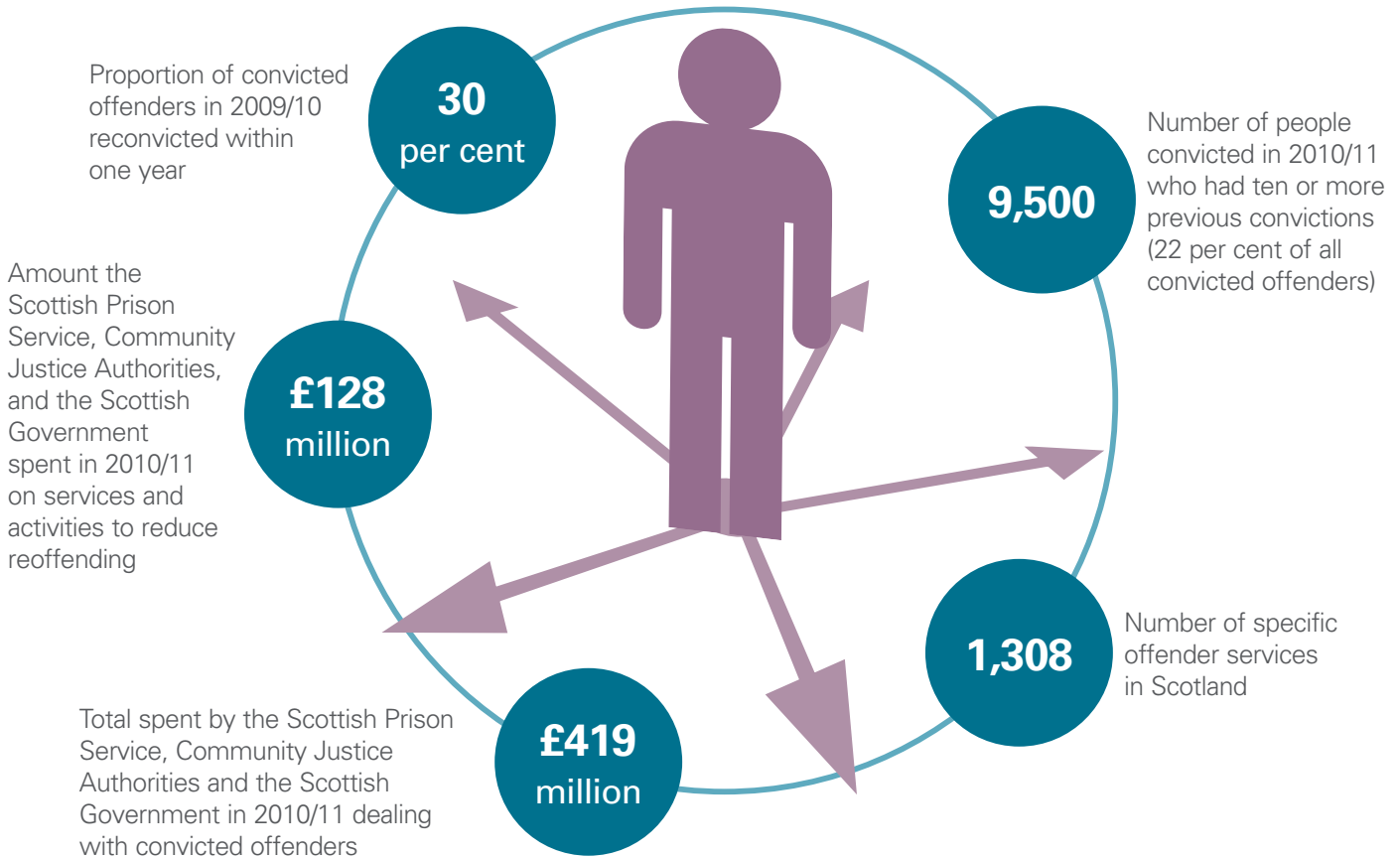
Reducing reoffending in Scotland

Prepared for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission
November 2012

 AUDIT SCOTLAND



Key facts



What's this report about?

This audit looked at the efficiency and effectiveness of approaches taken to reduce reoffending in Scotland. It focused on adult offenders sentenced in court.

Reoffending is a continuing problem in Scotland

- Reconviction rates in Scotland have remained relatively static over recent years; 30 per cent of people convicted in 2009/10 were reconvicted within one year compared to 32 per cent in 1997/98.
- In 2010/11, more than one in five people convicted (9,500) had ten or more previous convictions.
- The prison population has risen 27 per cent in ten years. In 2011/12, an average of 8,178 people were in prison on any one day.
- The Scottish Government estimates that reoffending costs Scotland £3 billion a year.

£128 million was spent on reducing reoffending in 2010/11. There is a mismatch between what is delivered and what is known to work

- In 2010/11, £419 million was spent by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) and the Scottish Government on dealing with convicted offenders. Less than a third of this (£128 million) was spent on services specifically to reduce reoffending.
- There is strong evidence on what works to reduce reoffending. This includes:
 - helping offenders find jobs, improving relationships with their families and communities, and managing their lives
 - relationships between support workers and offenders based on respect and trust; being flexible and non-judgemental; and relationships being maintained when offenders leave prison
 - tailoring approaches to offenders and their individual needs.
- Over 1,300 services are provided for offenders in prison and the community, but access and availability vary across Scotland. There is limited correlation

between what is offered and what works, for example, there are few services that address families and relationships or money management.

- The level of support for prisoners depends on the length of sentence being served. Better support for prisoners serving short sentences is needed.

Community Justice Authorities were established to improve joint working and reduce reoffending. They have brought people together, but the way they were set up and inflexible funding limit their effectiveness

- Many bodies are involved in dealing with offenders, including SPS, CJAs, councils, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, the Scottish Court Service, police, NHS boards, professional individuals, and over 100 voluntary and community organisations.
- Eight CJAs were established in 2007. They are independent government bodies, accountable to Scottish ministers, with boards consisting of councillors from constituent councils. SPS and councils have a duty to cooperate with CJAs, and a number of other bodies are statutory partners. But these bodies are not accountable to CJAs.
- Engagement and scrutiny varies among board members, and councillors can find it difficult to separate their CJA and council responsibilities. This has limited CJAs' ability to move funds between councils to meet local needs.
- CJAs' effectiveness is also limited by their lack of operational control (councils deliver criminal justice social work services) and small staff numbers – typically three or four.
- Community justice funding is inflexible and does not encourage reducing reoffending. CJAs had £99 million in 2010/11 to allocate to councils to deliver community-based sentences and other services for offenders. The cost of these sentences varies widely across the country.

Recommendations

The Scottish Government should:

- improve arrangements for funding community justice to ensure that:
 - the money is targeted towards effective approaches to reduce reoffending
 - there is more flexibility to meet local needs and priorities
 - allocations are more responsive to changes in demand

- improve the range of performance measures to assess the effectiveness of SPS, CJAs and councils in reducing reoffending
- review current arrangements for managing offenders in the community to ensure that:
 - there are clear and shared objectives to reduce reoffending
 - those working to reduce reoffending have appropriate powers
 - there is clear accountability and a mechanism to promote collective responsibility for reducing reoffending
 - arrangements promote and support what works in reducing reoffending and allow flexible service delivery
 - there is a more coordinated and strategic approach to working with the third sector.

The Scottish Government, SPS, CJAs and councils should:

- work together, and with other relevant public and third sector providers, to improve how services to reduce reoffending are planned, designed and delivered to ensure that they:
 - meet the needs of offenders, in particular those serving short prison sentences
 - recognise the level of demand
 - are based on evidence of what works
 - take into account costs of delivery.

CJAs and councils should:

- work together to improve their understanding of the costs of different types of criminal justice social work activity and how these relate to the quality of service. This should inform decisions on how resources are used and where efficiency could be improved.

What happens now?

The full report can be accessed on our website – www.audit-scotland.gov.uk. We will present our report to the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee. The Committee can call relevant people at the Scottish Government and other public bodies to discuss the issues our audit has raised.

We will also monitor progress against our recommendations through our audit work.

Key messages

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If you would like to find out more on this topic, you can download a copy of the full report from our website or contact our report team at info@audit-scotland.gov.uk

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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